

*The Church's Security, from the Providence  
of GOD Defending Her, and the Goodness  
of Her own Cause and Constitution.*

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# S E R M O N

PREACH'D Before the

## M A Y O R,

A N D

## Corporation of OXFORD,

A T

St. Martin's Church, on Monday

November the Fifth, 1705.

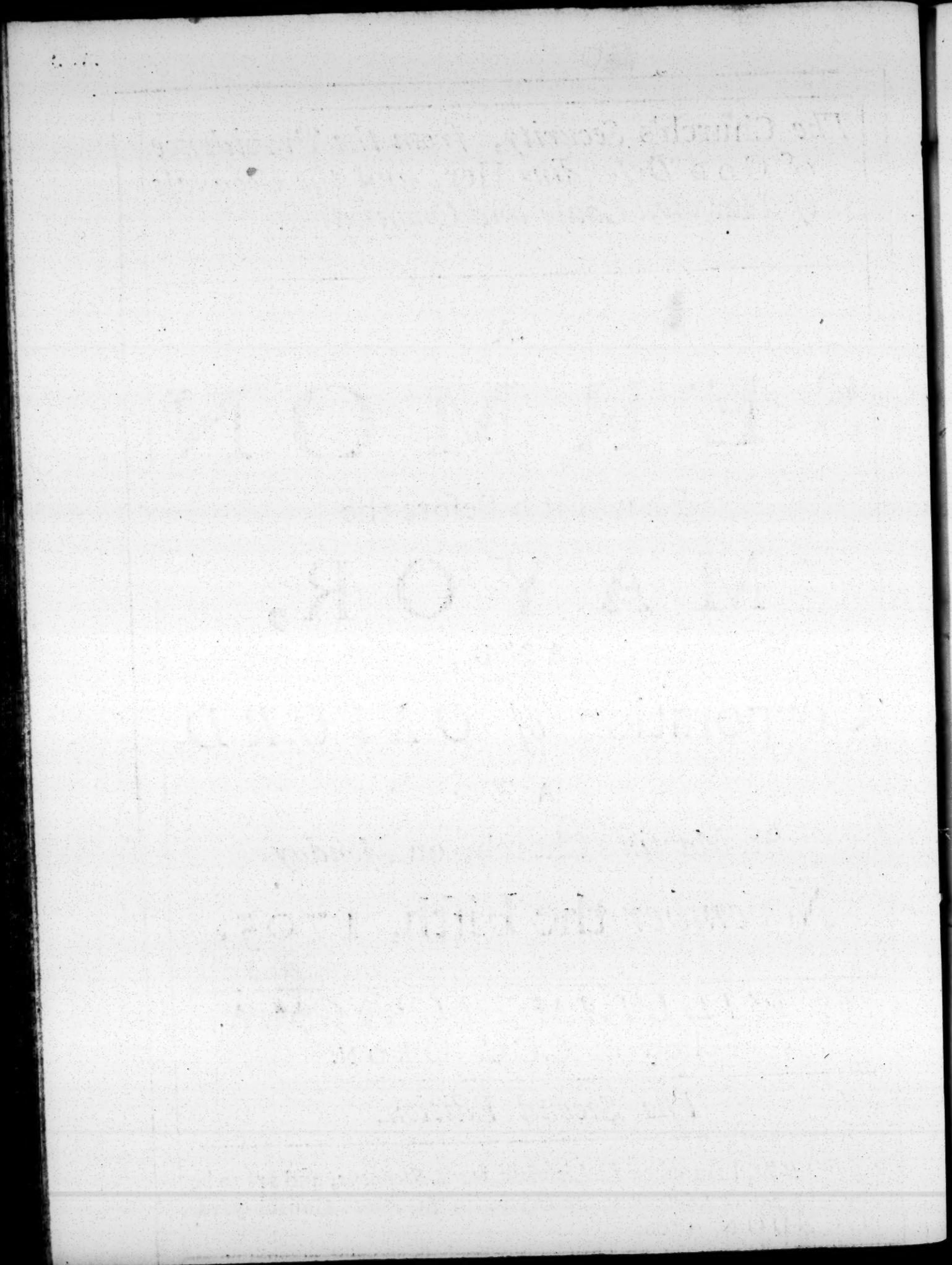
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# THE PREFACE.

THIS Discourse was hastily written, upon very little Notice, and with great Interruptions, and intended only for a popular Audience. Some of which Considerations, I hope, will be allow'd in my Excuse. However, I have had some Ground of Encouragement to think it might do good, amongst those, at least, for whom it was design'd: And if it may, I shall be the less concern'd for my own Reputation, or for any Reflection that may be made upon it.

For, I find, I must not hope to escape all, let me write and speak with all the Care I can. What should be the Ground and Reason of all that Displeasure that has risen of late, and the Clamour which has been set up against me, upon the Account of a Sermon at the

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## The P R E F A C E.

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*last Oxford Assizes, I cannot yet apprehend, nor discover with all my Pains. If I know my own Thoughts, and dare trust them at any Time, I am not sensible of any ill Design I had then, either in the preaching, or publishing that Discourse; nor can I find, upon the closest Examination of it, any thing, that I have deliver'd there, which is not thoroughly consistent with Reason and Christianity: so very far am I from apprehending any Principles of Faction, or Sedition, or Rebellion there, against any Kingdom, but that of Darkness, to which, I hope, I may have leave to profess my self an Enemy.*

*That I make any direct or oblique Reflections on the QUEEN, I utterly deny: Nay I appeal to all the World, whether I am not particularly careful to express my self with all the Duty and Veneration to Her that I ought. And 'twas easy for me to do so, because I was all the while writing from my own Heart and Affections. For 'tis my Opinion, and shall be my constant Assertion, that, if we once go off from our Zeal and Duty to Her present Majesty, 'tis to no purpose to pretend Obedience and Loyalty to any Prince here-*

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## The P R E F A C E.

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*hereafter, from any Principles of the Church of England.*

*If I have then said any thing there of the Danger of these Times, it was directed against those ill Men, that are both the QUEEN's Enemies and Ours. For, though we fear no Danger, for any want of Zeal and Affection to the Church of England in Her Majesty; and do verily believe in our Hearts, we never shall have reason: Yet have we no Enemies to contend against in these Days? None that we have reason to be afraid of? Are there no Schismaticks, Hereticks, and Republicans amongst us? Men, whose Principles are utterly inconsistent with the Peace and Happiness of our Constitution; or even with the very Continuance of it. Have we none that endeavour to molest our Peace, and would be glad to see our Ruine? And don't we see Men of no Religion, for that very reason, strike in, and join their Cry with all those that oppose Ours, so irreconcileable an Enemy to their loose and vicious Lives? And have not these Men as much Malice as ever, and are they not as active? And can it be a Breach of Duty to GOD, or the QUEEN,*

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## The P R E F A C E.

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for those, who by their Office are appointed to watch over the Church, to warn Men of their Danger from such Persons? Must we cry peace, peace, when there is no peace? Or, are we not rather bound in Conscience, and in Pursuance of our great Master's Commission, to lift up our voice like a trumpet, and to shew the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins? *And has not God threaten'd, that he will confound us before their Faces, if we do otherwise?*

*If. 58. 1.*

*Jer. 1. 17.*

Can we then think our selves secure from those Men? who, 'tis certain, want no Will to ruine us at any time, howsoever they endeavour now to give in false and counterfeit Representations of themselves, and to palliate and varnish over their base and dangerous Designs, by smooth and hypocritical Pretences\*. Do we not hear some Men every Day express all the Rancour and Bitterness against the Church of England that 'tis possible? Amongst whom the very Name of a Church-man is a Reproach, and can hardly escape the Violence of rude Hands. Are

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\* As an Instance of this, see the Dedicat. before the *Rights of the Dissenters.*

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## The P R E F A C E.

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*there not Men † that continually throw out their Poison against the Two pure Fountains of Religion and Learning, the Universities? That endeavour to possess the World with ill Opinions of us; and to represent us as the Nurseries of Rebellion and Faction, of bad Principles and worse Practices. And, who can tell of what fatal Consequence this may be to the Peace and Welfare of the Nation, when those Two so very considerable Bodies in the Church and State shall be thus impudently traduc'd? when those Streams, that reach throughout the whole Kingdom, shall be thus foul'd and polluted by the impure unhallow'd Feet of these Sinners against their own Souls!*

*And to sum up, and compleat the Insolence of all the rest; Are there not Men in these Days \*, who dare threaten us with our own Danger, and tell us, that we may have Occasion, in a little time, to practice those Principles of Meekness and Patience, which we*

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† See the *Reviews* and *Observators*. 'Tis beneath a Man to take Notice of the Impudence of these Fellows, any farther, than they certainly speak the Sense of the whole Faction.

\* See the *Review* Numb. 107, and another to which that refers.

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## The P R E F A C E.

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*teach? And is there no Danger from such Men as these? And can we dissemble it? And are we not bound in Duty to teach Men to be aware of it? 'Tis against these Men then, and these things, that I intended, whatsoever any Man may think I have spoken too severely in that Discourse.*

*And now, how the World may deal with me, or any of my Papers upon this Account, I do not so very well know, nor am I very careful: This one thing, by the Grace of God, I am fully resolv'd in, That the Defence of Truth, and the Answer of a Good Conscience, ought to be dearer to me, than any Interests in the World, than even my very Life it self; and I hope they ever will be.*

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## SERMON

Preach'd Novemb. 5<sup>th</sup>, &c.

ISAIAH LIV. 17.

*No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper ; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn.*

THE Promise here made of a Divine Protection and Security from Evil, is immediately directed to the Church of God, against which God assures *her*, upon his infallible Word, and upon the *Pledge* of his infinite and uncontrollable Power, no Designs or Practices of *her* Enemies should ever prevail, how well soever form'd and set together by the Rules of Policy, or the deepest Skill and Artifice of Malice. In all their secret Plots and Contrivances, and in their more Open and Violent Assaults, he tells us, he would be sure to disappoint them by the Might of his *own* Hand : And in their *more* refin'd, but not *less* malicious Methods of Proceeding against *her*, by the way of Cavil and Objection, Dispute and Controversy, *she her-self* should be sufficiently able to Confute and Baffle them, by the Clearness and Evidence of *her* Truth : *No weapon that is formed against thee*

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*thee shall prosper ; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.*

And beyond these two things, if we consider them both together, the mighty Strength of *her* Defence and Preservation from *without*, and the firmness of *her* own Cause and Constitution *within*, there can be nothing else necessary to give us the utmost Satisfaction of *her* Continuance and everlasting Establishment.

To this purpose therefore God is pleas'd, from the 11<sup>th</sup> Verse of this Chapter, to display the full Force of both these Arguments for the Church's Security, as it relies upon *his* Providence, and *her* own internal Excellency; and to speak so great things of *her*, and in Terms of such high Importance, as imply the most glorious State of Perfection in the *Church*, that 'tis possible for any Constitution in this World to arrive to. Speaking to the *Church*, in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Verses, by the way of Resemblance of *her* to a *Building*, (a Style very frequent both in the *Old and New Testament*) he tell *her* thus, *I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with Saphires; And I will make thy windows of Agates, and thy gates of Carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones;* that is, he would spare no Cost or Charge about *her*, that every part of *her* Structure must have in it a due Proportion of Ornament and Strength, of Firmness and Beauty together: For this we know is the peculiar Excellency of those *precious stones*, that are here brought in by the *Prophet*, as the choice *Materials* of *her* Composition.

And because they are so, and for that the *Church* is here said to be *founded* upon, and *built* up with them; hence we are enabled the better to understand what is here intended by this *figurative* way of Speaking, *viz.* *All* that divine Excellency of *Doctrine* and *Government*, which are necessary and essential to the *Church* of God; upon which

which it was *at first* founded, and by which it must *always* stand. Which appears more evident yet from what follows in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Verses, where the Prophet comes a little to explain himself; *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be establish'd.*

Thus far then we see the Prophet represents the Church's Security from *her* own *inward* Strength and Constitution. In the two next Verses before the Text follows *her* Protection from *without*, from the Power and Providence of God surrounding and guarding *her* on every side, from the Secret and Open Attempts of those that hate *her*: Behold, says God in the 15<sup>th</sup> Verse, *They shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee, shall fall for thy sake:* that is, he would certainly Blast and Defeat the Designs and Intentions of *her* Enemies, how strongly soever combin'd in their *Numbers*, or united in their Counsels against *her*. And for a Conviction to Men, that he was *able* to do all this, which he had declar'd he would do, He appeals, in the 16<sup>th</sup> Verse, to his absolute and irresistible Power, upon which all Creatures, even the most hurtful of them, Depend, not only for their Being, but their Power of Action: And therefore, to be sure, nothing could ever prevail to do Mischief beyond the Bounds and Limits that were set to it by *his Will*, and *high* Permission. *Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the master to destroy:* There is no Artificer of Fraud or Malice, but proceeds upon a borrow'd Strength, and can go no farther than God will let him. The *smith that with the tongs worketh in the coals*, as this Prophet elsewhere expresses it, and *fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his* <sup>11. 44. 2.</sup>

his arms, must fail and faint in his Spirits, were it not for that God, from whom he derives the very Strength, which he abuses to Instruments of Cruelty and Superstition; he depends, both for his Ability, and for his Success in his Work, upon a Power above him. And therefore where God has once made the Promise, the Church may rely upon him with a full Security, that *No weapon that is formed against her shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against her in judgment, she shall condemn.*

Which words, we now see, are a short Inference drawn from the joint Force of both the former Arguments; the watchful Providence of God over his Church, and *her* own sufficient Establishment; for that God is infinitely Powerful and Careful of *her*, therefore *No weapon that is formed against her shall prosper*: and because *she* is Established upon everlasting Grounds of Truth, *she* must prevail against all Exceptions of *her* Enemies, and *condemn* and silence *every tongue that shall rise against her in judgment*, to Arraign *her* Truth and Innocence,

In Discoursing upon these words, I shall, *First*, Enquire how far the Promise of Protection, made to the Church in *general*, may be apply'd to our own in *particular*, and upon what Grounds we may hope for the Accomplishment of it to our selves.

*Secondly*, I shall endeavour to represent our former great Deliverances, by the Providence of God over us; and how fully God has acquitted his Promise to our Church hitherto, in defending us, both from the Designs, and against the Objections of our Enemies; and this with a more particular Regard to to the Occasion of *this Day*.

*Thirdly*,

*Thirdly*, I will shew how well qualified our Church is at present to Answer the Cavils and Reproaches of *her* Enemies against *her*, and upon what Conditions, on our part, we may yet hope to be secur'd from their Designs.

I shall *First* enquire how far the Promise of God's Protection, and perpetual Defence to his *Church in general*, may be apply'd to *our own in particular*; and upon what Grounds we may hope, through God's Mercy, for the Accomplishment of it to our selves. And 'tis no more than necessary for me to make a *Distinction* in this case, because there is so great a *Difference* here to be observ'd between a Promise made to the *Catholick or Christian Church in general*, and the same when apply'd to any particular *Church or Constitution whatsoever*; and we can't depend upon the Performance of a Promise, when 'tis referr'd to this, or that, or any one part of the *Christian Church*, with the same Evidence and Certainty of Faith, that we may for God's continual Preservation of the *Church it self*. For his Engagement to the *Church in general* was this, that he would build it upon a secure Foundation, and preserve it by his Providence over it, and Presence in it, to the *end of the world*; that the gates of *hell* should never prevail against it, that is, no destructive Methods of the *Enemies of the Christian Religion* should ever prevail, to the final and universal Ruine of it: But that he would always keep up the Light of his Truth in the *World*, and take care, that whatsover *darkness might cover the earth*, and *gross darkness the people*, yet his Blessed Son should have always a *Lamp* before him in the *World*; always a Number of Men upon Earth, some where or other, professing his holy eternal Truth. But then, that this Society of Men

If. 60. 2.

<sup>1</sup> King 15. 4.

owning

owning and professing the Faith of Christ should be always the very same, and confin'd to the same Place and Nation, he has given us no such infallible Security from his Word, that we know of ; and we are sure, by the Event, it has been sometimes otherwise ; and God himself has often threaten'd the contrary, and executed it

*Rev. 2. 5.* for the Sins of Men ; When he has remov'd his *Candlestick* from a Nation, for their Abuse of the Light which he had given them ; and translated his *Kingdom* from one

*Matth. 21. 43.* People to another, that would *bring forth the fruits of it* in their Lives and Conversations.

Where are now the Seven famous *Churches of Asia*, that were once the Glory of the Christian World ! Has not God quench'd their

*Prov. 20. 20.* Light, and put it out in *Obscurity* ! Has he not withdrawn his more especial Presence from them, and given them up to be so far over-run with Ignorance, Barbarism, and Superstition, that there is hardly the Print of true Religion to be found amongst them ! And does he not still suffer them to live under the Tyranny and Oppression of their Enemies, that rule over them with a Rod of Iron ! So that what we now see and read in the *Prophecy* that *went before* concerning them, in the *Revelation* of St. John, seems to be only an *historical Account* of the Evils they have suffered.

We see then, that God does not think himself bound by his Faithfulness, or by Vertue of any Promise to the *Church in general*, to preserve any one *particular Church*, any longer, than it has those Conditions of Holiness and Purity in its own Constitution, and in the Members of it, which he expects. He will indeed always have a *Church* in some place or other of the World, till the End of it : but whether our *Church*, or our Neighbours shall be that, or any part of it, must depend upon other Considerations yet, of the Nature and

Quality

Quality of the Church it self, and the Behaviour of those Men that live under it. That there shall be some true Christian Church, as long as the World continues, he has absolutely promis'd, and 'tis but the just Reward of his Son's Sufferings, and he may claim it in the Right and Vertue of the Covenant between God and *him*; for he died to that End, that he might purchase *to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*. And therefore God has engag'd his own Truth to him, for the Certainty of the Event, that he may *see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied*. But then, we can no otherwise pronounce our own particular Church at any time to be that, which he will always continue to preserve, unless we find, upon a just Enquiry, those Marks of a true Church in it, which we may hope will never fail: so that, in short, you see, the Promise of Protection made to the Catholick Church, as such, is *absolute*, and without reserve, founded only upon the Merits of our Saviour, and with respect to those alone: but the Promise to any particular Constitution is *conditional*, and must depend both upon the Nature of that Constitution, and upon our own Lives too, who are the Members of it.

Tit. 2. 14.

Isaiah 53. 11.

I shall therefore now endeavour to shew, that the *Church of England* has those Qualifications or Conditions in it, so far as concerns it self, *as*, through the Mercy of God, will always engage his Presence in, and Protection over it, if we are not wanting to our selves.

The two great things, that go to make up the Nature of a Church, are *Doctrine* and *Discipline*, and therefore where these are found the best and purest, that Church in it self is, beyond all question, the most sound and excellent in its Frame and Constitution of any

any other in the World, and has the surest Title to the Divine Protection upon that account.

Now there is in the *Church of England*, and we may appeal to all the World for it, the greatest Purity of *Doctrine* and Worship possible; an exact Conformity between the Laws and Rules of our Religion, as it is establish'd amongst us, and the Religion of our Saviour, as we find it in the Gospel. The *Articles* of our *Faith* are *most* of them expressly asserted in very Words in the Writings of the New Testament; and the rest are deduced by plain and evident Consequence from thence: And the *Articles* of our *Church*, as it stands distinguish'd from any other, are, every one of them, laid out and fram'd according to the just *proportion of Faith*, the general Tenour of our Saviour's and his Apostles *Doctrine*. Is there any one thing, in the whole *Scheme* of our Religion, that we enjoin as necessary in its own Nature, which is not clearly so by the Laws of Christianity? Or do we corrupt the Gospel of our *Saviour*, by *wresting* it to any false and violent Sense, either to serve our Interest, or disguise the Faults of our Practice? Do we deal with the *Scriptures* as the *Church of Rome* does? Do we either *conceal* or *cancel* any part of them, in order to reconcile it to our Vices, that so it may less thwart and oppose any erroneous Opinions or *Customs* amongst us?

He that shall look into the Rules of Faith and Manners deliver'd by the *Papists*, will find them overcharg'd with such Numbers of *unnecessary*, and therefore *unlawful* *Articles*; he will find the *Inventions* of Men bound upon the Conscience, under such impudent Pretences of a Divine Authority, when there is not *one word* to be found for them in the Holy *Scriptures*, but a *great deal* that makes against them; he will find the plainest Rules of Life and Practice, either so expressly deny'd, or clearly dis-

disappointed of their just Influence, by the false and impious Interpretations of their *Doctors*, that he must presently conclude the great Folly and Danger of that Religion to the Souls of Men, and that surely *in vain they do worship God, teaching for doctrines such commandments as they do*. They defeat the main Design of the Christian Faith, and render the only means of Grace almost utterly ineffectual, by mixing with it so many of their own Corruptions.

That we have *then* utterly renounc'd the Errors of these Men, and all others, and that we are clearly *gone out* from amongst them, and have reform'd our selves upon the true Model of all Religion, the Word of God himself, *is* and *ought* to be some ground of **Comfort** to us, and an Encouragement to depend on God for our Defence and Preservation. For being the God of Truth, he will be the great *Patron* and *Protector* of it; and we can't but think him *there* to be more immediately concern'd for its Interest, *where* he finds it in the greatest Purity and Perfection: And therefore we may be sure that, unless the Sins of Men exceed, and provoke his Justice beyond measure, he will never suffer his own Cause to fall under the *Adversarie's* Hand, to be either *undermin'd* by the secret Attempts, or to be *over-born* by the violent Assaults of Error and Superstition.

So much then for the *Doctrine* of our Church; and as for our *Discipline*, and the outward Circumstances of our Worship, even there, where 'tis left undetermin'd by the Word of God, and referr'd to the Prudence and Direction of our Church-Governours; yet 'tis all so full of Order and Beauty; so well adjusted to Men's Necessities, so wisely suited to express the inward Frame

and Temper of Religion, and to assist and promote a true Devotion in the Hearts of Men; that if we judge not according to our Prejudices, but our *Reason*, we must conclude, that he, that is *the God of Order* is highly pleas'd with it, and that he will be jealous of its Honour, and will stand up in its Defence himself, as he requires in us a just Zeal and Concern for its Support. For *as* there is nothing which the Providence of God is more concern'd for in the World, than the Practice of Religion, so there can be no Frame and outward way of Worship more agreeable to his Will than that, which best serves the End and Interests of Religion. And therefore those Ceremonies, and that Worship, are certainly the best and purest, which tend to give us the most worthy Opinions of God, to create the most serious Awe and Reverence in the Hearts of Men towards him, and to teach Men how to express their inward Respect and Veneration, by a suitable Demeanour in his Presence.

I hope there is no need for me in this place, nor can I be expected, to go through the several Instances of Religion and Worship, in order to convince you both of the *internal* and *outward* Excellency of it. Those, that constantly attend the House of God, are better acquainted with *the Beauty of Holiness*, than that they should stand in need, upon every Occasion, to have it prov'd to them by long Arguments, which they can't deny. 'Twere easy otherwise to run through all the Doctrines of our Church, and shew the Agreeableness of every one of them to the holy Scriptures; and then to take each part of our Discipline asunder, and to prove its Conformity to the Word of God, or to the Practice of the purest and most primitive Ages of the Church, before ever *Popery* was heard of in the World; when Religion was at the highest pitch

of

of Perfection, both in the Hearts of its Professors, and the Circumstances of its Worship. But these things 'tis sufficient for me to assert *now*, and not to prove; my Design being only to shew into what comfortable Consequences this one Truth of the Purity and Excellency of our Church might be improv'd; and what Strength of Argument might be drawn from thence to conclude God's more especial Providence and watchful Concern for the Preservation of a Church, which has so much of Perfection in the Frame and Constitution of it.

If we observe the method of the *Prophet's Reasoning* in the Verses before my Text, we find he infers the Promise and Title it has to God Almighty's Protection and Defence, as a just Consequence from those admirable Advantages of Truth and Beauty laid in the Foundation and Structure of it. *I will make thy windows of Agates, and thy gates of Carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones: and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children:* And from hence it follows, *No weapon that is form'd against thee shall prosper.* When the Church was arriv'd to that Perfection and Glory, which God himself design'd for it, and in which himself delighted, there should then be a *Defence upon all this glory*; Is. 4. 5. and he would spread out the Arms of his Protection over it, as being a Charge more worthy of his more immediate Concern and Tuition.

We find in the Holy Scriptures, with what Reluctance God himself is represented to proceed, when the Sins of Men oblige him to desert, and extirpate a Church which himself had founded, more particularly in the 5<sup>th</sup> Chapter of *Isaiah*, where he is brought in under Expressions of the greatest Tenderness and Passion, expostulating with

the Jews, why they would force him by their Disobedience to pluck up and root out his own vineyard, when he design'd the greatest Care and Kindness over it, and had taken all the Methods possible for its Preservation and Continuance. But they had disappointed all by their Sins, and therefore he was now constrain'd, even contrary to his own Inclinations, to desert them, to break down the hedge of their Defence, and to leave them open to the *If. 5. 3. 4. 5.* Rapine and Violence of their Enemies. *And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard, I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up: and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be troden down.* And tho' we have now no new Prophecies deliver'd us, every day, concerning the methods of his dealing with the Church on Earth; yet being himself always the same, we may be sure he observes still the same measures of Wisdom and Justice in his Dispensations towards it. And since we plainly find the Purity and greater Perfection of the Church's Constitution, in old times, to be a greater Argument for his Preservation and Deliverance of *her*, we must conclude the same *now*, with respect to any Christian Church at present, where the Purity of Religion shall prevail. The same tender Care for the Salvation of Men's Souls will incline and oblige the *Father of Mercies* to continue them in the Possession of the best Religion upon Earth, *our own*, till there is no Hopes left that Men will be the better for it, and till they render themselves utterly unworthy of the Blessings they enjoy: And when they are *once* come to *such* an height of Iniquity as *this*, it then becomes Mercy in God to withdraw

draw the means of Grace from them ; since, upon their want of Improvement under so excellent a Religion, it must only turn to their greater *Condemnation*.

I have now endeavour'd to shew you, how far we may depend upon the *general* Promise of Protection made to the *Church*, as it respects our selves in *particular* ; and by what measures we may judge of God's more especial Regard to, and Care over, any Constitution ; namely, as 'tis the best and purest in it self, and produces answerable Fruits in the Lives and Practice of Men.

I shall now go on, *Secondly*, to represent our *former* great Deliverances by the Providence of God over us ; and how fully God has acquitted his Promise *bitherto*, by defending us both from the Designs, and against the malicious Objections, of our *old Enemies of the Church of Rome* ; and *that* with a more *particular* regard to the Occasion of *this Day*.

'Tis well known, amongst those that have heard, or understand any thing of the History of our *Reformation*, what violent measures, and sly artifices of *Devilish Policy* were made use of, in those first and *perilous times*, either to keep us *always* in our Errors, or to bring us back *again* to them, by a Set of Men of the *loosest Principles*, and blackest Malice ; who regard Religion it self no further than as the Pretence of it will serve to gratify their own wicked Designs, and keep up the Pomp and Grandeur of their *Apostate Church*. For *Popery* is a Religion, if it deserves that Name, that strikes at the very Root of *Christianity*, and wounds it in the most *tender* and *vital* parts ; bringing down the high and heavenly Doctrines of our *Blessed Saviour* to serve a mere worldly *carnal Interest*, and to keep up an unjust *Usurpation* upon the

Estates

Estates, Liberties, and Consciences of Men : A *Religion*, whose *Godliness* is only *gain*, whose *Doctrines* are *sensual* and *Devilish*, whose *Devotion* is *Superstition*, and whose *Discipline* is *Tyranny* : Which endures no Restraints of Conscience, when they stand in Competition with present Interest and Power : Which indulges Men in a Life of Looseness and Sensuality, changing or reversing all the Sanctions of the Gospel ; and evacuating the utmost Force of them, by accepting, instead of constant Holiness of Life, an easy Penance ; and for the eternal Punishments of another World, denounc'd upon *every soul of man that does evil*, proposing only a slight Censure, or a Sum of Money.

And 'twas with these Men's Principles and Practices our Church has been *now* conflicting almost two hundred Years. And their Malice against us has been always heighten'd and enrag'd, by the greater Opposition there was still between them and us in matters of Religion.

And as they never wanted Principles, so neither did they frequently Opportunities to our Ruine, had not the Hand of God himself interpos'd for our Security. When our Church at the Beginning of the Reformation was yet tender, and but a very *little Flock*, it was forc'd however to grapple with the long-settl'd Usurpations of Prejudice, and against all the Disadvantages of an Enemy, arm'd with Terrors, and fir'd with Revenge. How many Designs were still in hand, either by Fraud or Violence to have overturn'd the *Church of England*, and to have stifled it in its very Infancy ! 'Twas compass'd in by Enemies on every side : *without were fightings, and within were fears* : Fears even from those who pretended to be *her Friends*, and yet were ready, upon any favourable Occasion, to have let in

in the Enemy upon *her* with all his Violence. And yet we see the invincible Strength and Firmness of *Truth*, however *naked* and unarm'd with *temporal* Advantages, when supported and sustain'd by the secret Aid and Influence of Heaven. How did our Church, in *those days*, stand firm in the midst of all the Floods of *her* Persecutors, pass safe through all their Attempts, and at the same time Triumph over all their Objections.

For neither did they fail in any supply of *Wit* or Artifice of *Learning*, if any had been sufficient, to oppose the Truth, and to have supported Error. Almost all the Means and Opportunities of Learning were, at that time, in their Hands ; and by a long Use and Preparation, they had Arguments ready upon every turn ; and Industry enough to apply them with all Advantage. And yet even *then*, by the good Providence of God, there were found Men amongst us able to stand up in our Defence ; to encounter our sharpest Enemies at their own *Weapons* ; and to bear them *down*, by the Force of Truth, to their *Confusion*.

Such as this was the perpetual Contest for many Years ; and notwithstanding our Adversaries were still the more whetted by constant Opposition, and had gone as far in the Researches of Learning, as 'twas possible for Men of the best Abilities, and greatest Application, of that time ; yet God Almighty never left his Church without able Pillars to sustain *her* ; and added more Strength, where the Weight was heavier, and the Exigence and Necessity of times requir'd it. So that even the *Jesuits* themselves, those refin'd Disputants, so well vers'd in all the *Shifts* and *Quirks* of Reasoning, have been forc'd to give out in their way at *last* ; and silently to own the Burden

too

too great for them, and their Cause too bad to be defended by such Methods. So far has the Promise of God, in the *Text*, been verified to our Church already; in that *She* surmounted all the Objections of *her* worst and most ingenious Adversaries, and *condemn'd* to Silence *every tongue that rose in judgment to oppose her*.

But when these measures were entirely disappointed, there were other still succeeding, to undermine our Church, by the more subtile Arts of Policy, and deep Contrivances of *dark* and *hidden Designs*. And 'tis to these our *sure* and *fast* Friends the *Jesuits* have chiefly had Recourse of late, being less concern'd *now* for that mighty Reputation of Learning, *once* in their Order, if they can serve their own Cause, and confound their Enemies, by Arguments found much more effectual than Disputing: I mean, those very powerful Ones of *Fire* and *Fagot*; of Cruel *Massacres*; of Plots and *Conspiracies* against the Lives of Kings and their People: *one* of which well urg'd, and set home, has very often done them more Service in a Nation, than *fourty* Arguments from Reason.

And amongst the rest of these, the *Conspiracy* of this Day claims the Precedence of hellish Policy; and represents all their Skill in Ruine, and refin'd Arts in Blood and Murder, at one View. A Design hatch'd with so much Malice, so deeply laid, and so secretly carried on; so nearly effected, and of so wide and destructive an Influence if it had succeeded, that we may defy the Records of *former* Times to *shew* an Instance like it, or the utmost Villany of the present and future Ages to *contrive* one. A Design, that must have overturn'd our Constitution at one blow; laid all the Honour of our Nation in

in the Dust, at once; and have for ever prevented the means of our Recovery.

If we judge then of the Greatness of a Deliverance by the Greatness of the Danger we escape; it becomes us often in our private Thoughts, upon every Occasion, however always upon the grateful Return of this Solemnity, to render our highest Tribute of Praise and Thanks to the God of Heaven, for this so great a Blessing, that so very nearly concerns us *still*; the Influence of which we feel all of us at this very Day: since without it we should either, most of us, not have been at all, or have been always miserable. And now we are all well and happy this Day, and rejoicing under the Protection, and in the Sense and Influence of God's Mercy; *For which thy name, O God, be prais'd from generation to generation. The fathers shall tell the children and declare thy truth. For is there a nation under heaven, that has God so near to them for their defence and safety, as this great and happy people; Happy if they know their own Happiness, and have the Hearts to give God the Praise and Glory for it! He is the rock of our defence, and the God of our salvation; Therefore will we not fear though the earth be moved; and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof rage and swell; and though the mountains shake at the tempest of the same.*

Psal. 46. 2, 3:

And so I come to the *Third* and *Last* part of my Discourse, to shew how well qualify'd our Church is at present to answer the Cavils and Reproaches of *her* Enemies, and how we may *still* hope to be secur'd from their Designs.

And this I take to be very pertinent to the Aim and Intendment of my Text, which is not levell'd at the

Church's Enemies of any one *particular* Strain or Denomination ; but reaches out a Promise of Protection and Security from their Attempts and Objections against *her* in all Ages. I shall mention those however, that have the nearest Relation to this present Time of our *Solemnity* ; and which, though we have answer'd them never so often before, by Arguments drawn both from our Principles and Practice, are yet *still* produc'd and urg'd against us, by some Men, in order to their own Designs ; when, at the same time, they themselves are, or ought to have been, entirely convinc'd, both of the utter Vanity and Slander of them : And they are these that follow ;

That our Church is *Popish* in its Ceremonies and Discipline ; and that those Men, who stand up with the greatest Zeal in her Defence and Vindication, are *Popishly* inclin'd, and affected to a *Popish* Interest.

As to the *Former* of these, one would have expected, after so many laborious *Tracts*, written on purpose to vindicate our Church in this point by Men, who many of them themselves suffer'd in their dearest Interests, and some of them in their very Lives, for their Opposition to *Popery*, that surely this Objection should have been now quite out of Doors ; and that, though Men might have retain'd the same ancient *Malice* still against our Church as ever, yet they might, in *Prudence*, have spar'd themselves the *idle pains* of attacking it by a Weapon, that had lost all its Edge and Force against us so long ago. 'Tis not possible for me, in a Discourse of this short Compass, to pass through the long Stages of this Controversy in all its parts ; it may be sufficient only to referr Men to some of these substantial *Treatises* written in our Defence upon this

this Subject, with so much Clearness, and Strength, and Force of Argument, that we have never known them yet answer'd to any purpose; and we are sure they never can be. Those that I shall mention are, Bp. Jewel's *Apology for the Church of England*, and Mr. Hooker, and Mr. Chillingworth's Books; the last of whom was treated with all the Rudeness and Insolence by the *Faction*, both in his \* Person and † Memory, for no other Reason so much, that we can think of, unless 'twas, because he had so effectually prevented and weaken'd their old Charge of *Popery* against the *Church of England*, by vindicating *her* so very clearly and powerfully from any Imputation of that Nature. And to those Men, who, after all the Pains and Travel of these great Men I have here nam'd, and others, the most learned in the World, will have the Courage, or the Impudence, still to be suggesting 'this old thred-bare *Cavil* against us, I think it necessary at present to make no other Reply than this general one; That almost every Usage of any Consequence, enjoyn'd at present by the *Church of England* in *her* Service, is to be found in the ancient *Liturgies* and *Histories* of the Primitive Church; long before ever *Popery* came to prevail in the World, or the *Church of Rome* was known for its Corruptions \*.

But then, as for the other Objection against us, That Church-men, in the Zeal they shew for the Church, have ill Designs, and are effected to a *Popish* Interest; this is a *Cavil* indeed of a more modern Date, and fresher Stamp, and fit to spring up in an Age so very cor-

\* See *Ld. Clarendon*, Book VIII. p. 365, 6. † By Cheynell at his Burial, See *Cheynell's Account of Mr. Chillingworth's Sickness, Death, and Burial, especially his Speech at his Funeral.*

\* And for any Man's more thorough Satisfaction in this point, let him consult *L'Estrange's Alliance of Divine Offices*.

rupt as this, and so utterly lost to the true Spirit and Temper of Religion. We may remember however, how much Service this *Cry of Popery*, against the true Defenders of the Church, did those ill Men, whose Design was nothing less than to overturn it in the Beginnings of the last great *Rebellion*: And, when they urge it against us now, upon no more Reason, and with the same or greater Violence, than they did even *then* in those worst of Days, when all Men saw, by the sad Consequences, *what* they had been all along *driving at*; I would only ask, whether it may not give us some Suspicion, that there is a Race of Men in the World taking their Aims, by the same means, at the same *Blessed Ends*, their Forefathers once accomplish'd; to the utter Subversion of our Constitution, both in Church and State.

But how *unreasonable* are Men in these malicious Suggestions against us, *for ever*! What greater Evidence could possibly have been given at any time, that the Members of the *Church of England* are at the greatest Distance from any *Popish* Inclinations, that we have not given them? Have we not taken all the Oaths to the *Queen's Majesty*, and the present Settlement, that were requir'd of us? And I am sure, they are bound in Charity, and by the Laws of Christianity, to think we have done it with a good Conscience, and thorough Satisfaction to our Selves, till they can prove we have not; which we hope they never will be able. And yet after all, *still* we must be *Popishly* affected!

If Arguments from Reason and Charity will not satisfy them, let us come now to *History*, and the Experience of former Times. Who, but the *Church of England*, and her best and most zealous Members, in a late unhappy Reign, when

when *Popery* was just rolling in upon us like a mighty Deluge, stood up with that Strength and Bravery to oppose its Progress, and were the great *Banks* and *Shores* to break the Violence and Fury of it? When the Dissenters, (to their eternal Shame and Conviction be it spoken) paid all their Addresses and Complements to the *Government*, and its Proceedings; and accepted many insinuating Favours from it, which the *Church-of-England-men* refused, upon Principles of Conscience. But these Good-men! (notwithstanding their seeming Stiffness against *Popery* at other times) could then comply to any thing, if they could but lessen the *Church's* Esteem and Authority by it; and come *Popery*, or whatever else, were very easy and well pleas'd, and caress'd themselves in their own Privileges, only to see *us* beneath themselves.

I shall not here insist, that almost all those noble Defences, that were written against *Popery* in those times, were done by the Hands of *Church-men*; all besides Three \* *cold Pamphlets*, that *stole* out as it were in *Moonlight*, as if their Authors had been ashame'd of them, and perhaps they had some reason. But I will not urge this any longer as an Objection against these Men, that they wrote no more against *Popery* in those Days, for it may be they were not able; I am sure 'tis an Argument of our Charity for them, if we think so.

But then besides, Did not many of us actually suffer in our Resistance of *Popery* at that Time? In this great and learned Body of our own *University*, Was there not one whole Society turn'd out of all their Interests, for their brave defence of their Religion, and a good Conscience? And all the rest were prepar'd in Mind and Will to undergo the same, little less than *fiery Trial*, upon the same Reason. At that Time, Men that had no great

\* See the Catalogue of Books and Pamphlets written at that time against *Popery*.  
Kind-

Kindness for us before, even our worst Enemies, were *asham'd*, and *convinc'd* that we had no mixture of *Popery* in our *Principles*, when they saw our *Practice* so clearly prove it beyond all *Question*. And *why* is this Argument in our Behalf, so soon forgotten in these Days? And *why* must Church-men still be arraign'd as *Papists*? when the *Papists* themselves will own they met with no severer Checks and Opposition to their Proceedings, than from the best Members of the *Church of England*.

Will nothing satisfy the endless Jealousies and Suspicions of Men? Will they never believe us that we are no Friends to *Popery*, that we are at the greatest Abhorrence to, and Distance from it, and are ready to undergo any thing rather than comply with it? Will Men never be perswaded that we are willing to suffer *again*, unless they see us do so? And to see *this* indeed might perhaps serve to *gratify* their *Malice* against us; but, I am sure, there is nothing wanting, without it, to satisfy their Reason.

I could say a great deal more upon this point, but I must hasten to a Conclusion: And if what has been already said, be not sufficient to put them, in some measure, out of Countenance with this Objection of *Popery* against us, 'tis to be fear'd that nothing will: and therefore 'tis to no Purpose indeed to dwell any longer upon this Argument.

And since there is so much Reason on our side, against the Objections of our Enemies, we may still hope to be secur'd from the *Designs* and *Practices* of evil Men against our holy Religion, if we are not wanting to our selves; if we don't desert and leave our excellent Church in these evil Days, nor suffer our *Love* towards it to *wax cold*, by reason of that great *Iniquity*, with which these Times *abound*; if we continue to possess our Minds with a just Value and Esteem for our holy Faith; if we maintain a firm

a firm and unshaken Zeal for it in our Hearts, and be ready to express it, upon all Occasions, in our Words and Actions, by a just and vigorous Defence of our Religion. Otherwise, the Goodness of God will never think it self concern'd to secure us in the Continuance of a Church amongt us, though never so good a one, if we our selves despise it, and judge our selves unworthy of the great Advantages we enjoy: For he has no Delight in slothful Men, but will suffer those Evils to overtake them, which they fear; and from which, tho' their very Hearts tremble at the Apprehension of them, yet they will not so much as reach out their Hands for their own Security.

Above all, let us be sure to add to our Zeal for our Religion, the Virtues and Graces of a pure and holy Life; for these will be our best Security from Evil, and will fight for us more than *an armed Man*. They will most effectually silence the Calumnies and Ignorance of our Enemies, and engage the firmest Protection of Heaven on our side. Let us be careful therefore to *Add to our faith and Zeal, virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity*; for if these things be in us and abound, they will make us that we shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the best Means of Grace, and the purest Religion in the World.

2 Pet. 1. 5, 6.

*And may God Almighty give all Grace, at least in this our day, to know the things that belong to our Peace, before they are for ever hid from our Eyes, for Jesus Christ his Sake: To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be given all Praise, Honour and Glory, throughout all the Churches of the Saints, now and for evermore. Amen.*

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